1. Assisting entrepreneurs to identify joint venture and technology partners from other countries.

2. Networking of focal points throughout India of public and private sector institutions, active in promotion of business cooperation between Indian firms and foreign firms.

3. Increasing the awareness of services available from UNIDO and its investment promotion services in developed and developing countries in the area of investment project identification, formulation, screening and evaluation.

4. Organising INTECHMARTS for technology and investment match-making at the State-level.

5. Following up the projects identified for joint venture in the previous INTECHMARTS held at New Delhi in 1995 and 1996.

The Project is for a period of two years starting from 1st May, 1996. The ITPI Project is mainly to promote cooperation between small and medium enterprises for technology transfer and joint ventures. This will contribute to small and medium enterprises development, which in turn will lead to skills upgradation and employment generation having, thus, direct impact on poverty alleviation programme.

Rubber Plantation in West Bengal

4507 SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to encourage rubber plantation in West Bengal; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Exploratory surveys conducted by Rubber Board indicate suitability of around 15,000 ha of land in different parts of West Bengal. The Rubber Board set up a regional Research Station at Nagrakatta in Jalpaiguri District in 1989 to undertake specific research activities for evolving suitable clones and other locally cultural practices. Subsequently a Field Office was opened at Siliguri. The Board has also established a group planting centre, a demonstration plot in an area of 12.00 ha and a nursery in Orgam village of Burdwan District.

So far an area of 35.64 ha has been planted with rubber. During 1995, planting is expected to be carried out in another 50.00 ha.

Diversification in STC

4508. SHRI NAMDEO DIWATHE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government proposes to diversify the functioning of the State Trading Corporation (STC) into domestic marketing;

(b) if so, the details of the proposed scheme alongwith, with the reasons therefor;

(c) the time by which the scheme is likely to come into operation;

(d) the total investment proposed to be made available for the scheme; and

(e) the details of marketing plan for the current year for Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c). Consequent on decanalisation of items of export and import and in a bid to expand its turnover and profitability State Trading Corporation, (STC) has diversified its operations. It has taken to trading in oil seeds, coffee, cashew etc. Besides, it proposes to increase its domestic trading in tea, coffee, pulses, refined soyabean, safflower (Kardi) oil etc.

(d) and (e). No investment in fixed assets is proposed. Domestic sales for 1996-97 is Rs. 100 crores against Rs. 78 crores achieved in 1995-96. The Maharashtra operations are expected to be around Rs. 10 crores during the current year.

Complementing Scheme for Scientists of Commodity Boards

4509. SHRI P.C. THOMAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether flexible complementing scheme has been approved for scientists of commodity boards;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons for delay?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise

(c) This is a policy matter requiring consultations with several Ministries in the Government.